

DATeline #67 NEW YORK
ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER

APRIL 7, 1976

"FINGERPRINTING" WORKS OF ART
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS DATeline... ANOTHER
IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS
IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, OUR DATeline IS NEW YORK
CITY. HERE IS ----- WITH ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER'S
STORY THAT ANSWERS THE QUESTION: IS THERE A FOOL-PROOF
WAY TO PROTECT PRICELESS WORKS OF ART AGAINST THEFT?

VOICE: A CRIMINAL MAY CHANGE THE WAY HE LOOKS AND THE WAY
HE LIVES BUT THERE IS NOTHING HE CAN DO ABOUT HIS
FINGERPRINTS. THEY ARE UNIQUE TO HIM AS THEY ARE TO
EVERYONE ELSE. OF THE MILLIONS OF SETS OF PRINTS ON
FILE WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, NO TWO ARE EXACTLY
ALIKE. AND BECAUSE THEY ARE DIFFERENT, THEY ARE AN
INVALUABLE MEANS OF MAKING A POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION.
COULD A SIMILAR METHOD BE USED TO ESTABLISH THE TRUE
IDENTITY OF AN OBJECT OF ART? ALAN BAER, PRESIDENT OF
THE INTERNATIONAL ART REGISTRY IN NEW YORK THINKS IT
CAN. HIS COMPANY USES A DEVICE WHICH PINPOINTS AND
RECORDS SUCH MINUTE PHYSICAL DETAILS AS THE NUMBER OF
THREADS IN A TAPESTRY, THE WHIRLS OF PAINT ON A CANVAS
OR THE GRAIN OF WOOD IN FURNITURE. HE CALLS IT
"FINGERPRINTING."

VOICE: THE DEVICE, WHICH IS CALLED AN "OPTICAL COMPARATOR," FOCUSES ON A TINY SEGMENT OF THE OBJECT. A GRID WHICH IS SUBDIVIDED BY LETTERS AND THEN AGAIN BY NUMBERS IS LAID OVER THE SEGMENT. THE DESIRED DETAILS THEN FALL WITHIN THE GRID'S PARAMETERS. MR. BAER USES A FINE FRENCH PAINTING TO DEMONSTRATE:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- BAER

"WE THEN TOOK THE ORIGINAL SCHOOL OF PARIS PAINTING AND WENT TO A RESTORER AND ASKED HIM TO CREATE A DUPLICATE OF THE ORIGINAL WORK OF ART -- WHICH HE DID. AND YOU WILL SEE THE CORRESPONDING DETAIL AREA OF THE FORGERY ON THE RIGHT HANDS SIDE OF THE OPTICAL COMPARATOR. YOU CAN SEE HOW THE GRID CROSSES THE ORIGINAL AT A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ANGLE INsofar AS THE LETTERS OF THE (ARTIST'S) NAME ARE CONCERNED THAN IT DOES INsofar AS THE FORGERY IS CONCERNED."

VOICE: WHEN THE FINGERPRINTING IS COMPLETED, THE ART REGISTRY RESEARCHES AND VERIFIES A COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE OWNERSHIP AND VALUE OF THE WORK. A LABEL SHOWING THAT SUCH AN EXAMINATION HAS BEEN MADE IS THEN ATTACHED TO THE OBJECT ITSELF. ALAN BAER BELIEVES THAT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS PROCEDURE IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE FACT THAT, TO DATE, NONE OF THESE WORKS HAVE BEEN STOLEN EVEN THOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN THEFTS AT THE SAME MUSEUM.

AS A PUBLIC SERVICE, THE INTERNATIONAL ART REGISTRY MAINTAIN "ARTCENTRAL," A COMPUTERIZED RECORD OF ALL ART OBJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN STOLEN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THIS CONSTANTLY UP-DATED RECORD IS KEPT IN COOPERATION WITH INTERPOL, THE FRENCH-BASED INTERNATIONAL

VOICE: POLICE AGENCY, AS WELL AS LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT
(CONT'D) AGENCIES AND INSURANCE COMPANIES. IF A REGISTRY-
EXAMINED WORK IS STOLEN OR RETRIEVED, ART CENTRAL
CAN PROVIDE INTERPOL WITH ITS FULL DOCUMENTATION AND
POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION. ALAN BAER FORESEES A DAY
WHEN THE INFORMATION HIS ORGANIZATION IS GATHERING
WILL PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF HOW ART
IS COLLECTED AROUND THE WORLD AND MUSEUM ADMINISTRATORS
WILL HAVE AN ACCURATE RECORD OF THEIR HOLDINGS:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- BAER

"FOR THE FIRST TIME, DATA WILL BE AVAILABLE TO
ADMINISTRATORS SO THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO APPLY
FUNDS TO AREAS THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY.
WHEREAS HERETOFORE ONE MADE A DECISION WITH REGARD
TO FUNDING IN AN ART SITUATION BASED UPON A "SEAT
OF THE PANTS" JUDGMENT, NOW WE CAN START TO HAVE
DATA SO THAT THE FUNDS CAN BE APPLIED IN A MUCH MORE
INTELLIGENT WAY THAN THEY HAVE EVER BEEN APPLIED
BEFORE."

VOICE: THE INTERNATIONAL ART REGISTRY CURRENTLY SAFEGUARDS
ART WORK VALUED AT MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED MILLION
DOLLARS. AND, SO FAR, THEIR MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON
IS THE SILENT AND INVISIBLE "FINGERPRINT" OF THE WORK
ITSELF.

ANNCR: YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO DATELINE. . . ANOTHER IN
THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND
EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, YOU HEARD A
REPORT ON A FIRM IN NEW YORK CITY THAT'S DEVELOPED
A WAY TO -- SO TO SPEAK -- "FINGERPRINT" WORKS OF
ART...TO PROTECT THEM AGAINST THEFT. JOIN US AGAIN

ANNCR: NEXT ----- (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER PROGRAM
(CONT'D) IN THIS SERIES. THIS IS -----.

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WJL/CAK